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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 002456

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SUBJECT: PRC CONCERNS ABOUT POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE IN
AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson for reasons
1.4 (B/D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In an August 25 meeting with PolOff, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee International Liaison Department (CCID) Third Bureau Director Wu Baocai expressed concern about post-election violence in Afghanistan and uncertainty as to how to evaluate the strength of the Taliban. While noting that the CCP looked to expand its party-to-party engagement with Afghanistan beyond current levels, Wu confirmed that the CCP did not have and was not seeking contact with the Taliban. Wu suggested that the U.S. and Iran shared common interests in Afghanistan and acknowledged that the CCID was evaluating how to improve China's image in the Muslim world following the early July outbreak of ethnic unrest in Xinjiang province. End summary.

POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE

¶2. (C) Wu Baocai, Director of the CCID Third Bureau, which covers West Asia and North Africa, told PolOff during a wide-ranging 90-minute conversation August 25 that the violent aftermath of the June 12 Iranian presidential election had been a surprise, and CCID officials were "very concerned" about the prospect of post-election violence in Afghanistan. Wu expressed belief that there was a high likelihood that losing presidential candidates in Afghanistan's August 20 presidential election would stir public discontent by drawing public attention to voting irregularities. He expressed hope that losing presidential candidates would respect the legal process and avoid seeking redress for perceived injustices through violent means. When asked what actions the Chinese were prepared to take to aid stability following the announcement of results, Wu responded that his organization did not have any plans, in keeping with China's policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

CCID UNSURE ABOUT STRENGTH OF TALIBAN

¶3. (C) According to the latest information Wu said he had received, the Afghanistan Taliban's current active force strength was at approximately 5,000-7,000 fighters and the Pakistan Taliban's combined active force strength was at roughly 10,000 fighters. Wu indicated that he did not have a high degree of confidence in these figures. Wu stated that he read a press report August 24 that Pakistan Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud was sick, yet still alive, which conflicted with U.S. press accounts of Mehsud's death. Wu acknowledged the difficulty in evaluating the overall strength of the Taliban as well as the level of coordination between various factions in Afghanistan and Pakistan. International

attitudes toward the Taliban, including by the Muslim world, were "very confusing," Wu said. Did Pakistan support and direct Taliban actions, or was the Taliban an enemy of the Pakistani state, Wu asked rhetorically.

CCP SEEKS RELATIONS WITH POLITICAL PARTIES, NOT TALIBAN

14. (C) The CCP had a formal party-to-party relationship with one Afghan political party, the Islamic Movement of Afghanistan, and hoped to develop formal party ties with additional legally-recognized political parties in Afghanistan, according to Wu. The CCP currently maintained a formal party relationship with 520 political parties from 160 countries and had two preconditions for establishing such relations. First, the foreign political party had to be legally recognized by the state in which it operated. Second, the foreign political party had to seek positive, friendly ties with the CCP. On this basis, the Taliban did not qualify for a relationship with the CCP because it was not legally recognized as a political party under Afghan law.

The CCP "does not have any contact with the Afghanistan Taliban," Wu stressed, and did not have any plan to establish contact.

U.S. AND IRAN SHARE COMMON INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN

15. (C) Wu expressed the view that the U.S. and Iran shared a common interest in defeating the Taliban, stemming the transnational flow of drugs and weapons from Afghanistan, building Afghanistan's infrastructure, and expanding its

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economy. Afghanistan and Iran shared a historical and linguistic bond that helped the two countries understand each other's intentions. Iran's investment in northwest and western Afghanistan and its plan to build a railway link and expressway running through Afghanistan were praiseworthy endeavors, according to Wu.

CHINA PURSUING MUSLIM OUTREACH

16. (C) Following the early July outbreak of ethnic unrest in Xinjiang province, CCID had launched a comprehensive review of China's relationship with the Muslim world, Wu noted. As part of this review, CCID was studying various countries' outreach to the Muslim world, "especially the United States'." The Chinese had noted President Obama's Cairo speech and recent message to the Muslim world on Ramadan. The Muslim world was growing, and thus it was important to improve China's relations with countries of the Muslim world, according to Wu.

HUNTSMAN